Abstract

The aim of this BA thesis is to closely analyse the ways in which Eugene O'Neill embeds other texts from the literary canon in his work and how these references to other texts influence his plays. Mainly focusing on *Long Day's Journey into Night*, its sequel *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, *Desire Under the Elms*, and the trilogy *Mourning Becomes Electra*, the thesis explores O'Neill's work with intertextuality.

Focusing on *Long Day's Journey into Night* and its sequel *A Moon for the Misbegotten* the thesis traces O'Neill's use of citation as a means of building characters and themes. O'Neill borrows quotes from canonical literary works to enhance his characters' expression. He utilizes intertextuality and literary allusions in order to create a very specific communication channel through which the characters express their minds. Especially in *Long Day's Journey into Night* the number of literary allusions is remarkable and raises the question of whether the quotations are a way of expressing the characters' identities or whether it is a vehicle that O'Neill uses to give the play a more universal and all-embracing feature.

The thesis also contrasts these direct quotations with another notion of literary allusion present in O'Neill's work – his interpretation and repurposing of traditional dramatic themes dating back to ancient Greece. In *Mourning Becomes Electra* O'Neill revises the theme of Aeschylus' *Oresteia* – revenge. In *Desire Under the Elms* Eugene O'Neill presents another classical Greek tragedy – *Hippolytus* by Euripides. These two plays present examples of the broad scope of O'Neill's attempts to create plays which themes would be regarded as universal and omnipresent.

To conclude, the thesis provides an analysis of different approaches to intertextuality in the work of Eugene O'Neill in sample of the selected plays. It examines the variety in literary allusions – from direct quotation to the simple

inspiration by a traditional theme of a Greek tragedy. The thesis shows how these references create a space for O'Neill to depict his stories in the scheme of the literary canon and the way in which this strategy contributes to the universality of his dramatic work.